

Message Text

PAGE 01 STATE 184134

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S E C R E T STATE 184134

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (ADDITION OF CAPTION EXDIS)

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, KS

SUBJECT: F-5A AIRCRAFT

1. STATE AND DEFENSE CURRENTLY ATTEMPTING TO DEVELOP FIRM PLANS FOR TRANSFER OF 36 F-5A AIRCRAFT TO ROK AS REPLACEMENTS FOR THE 36 F-5AS THEY PROVIDED LAST FALL UNDER ENHANCE PLUS. USDAO SAIGON HAS IDENTIFIED 47 F-5AS IN VIETNAM FOR RELEASE, AND WE ARE TRYING TO DETERMINE EXACTLY THE CONDITION OF THESE AIRPLANES AND REQUIREMENTS FOR MAINTENANCE AND PARTS. AVAILABLE INFORMATION INDICATES THAT ONLY 19 ARE NOW FLYABLE, AND THE REMAINING
SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 184134

28 ARE IN VARYING CONDITIONS FROM FAIR TO TERRIBLE. SOME AIRCRAFT MAY EVEN HAVE BEEN CANNIBALIZED. WE UNDERSTAND THAT USAF TEAM NOW MEETING AT PACAF HQ IN HAWAII ON SUBJECT.

2. OUR TOTAL REQUIREMENT FOR F-5AS IS 56, SINCE WE ARE OBLIGATED TO PROVIDE 20 TO THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA IN ADDITION TO THE 36 FOR KOREA. IN ADDITION TO THE 47 AIRCRAFT AVAILABLE IN VIETNAM, DEFENSE HAS DETERMINED THAT 9 F-5AS NOW AT WILLIAMS AFB CAN BE SHIPPED TO THE FAR EAST SO WE CAN MEET OUR COMMITMENTS. ALTHOUGH THESE 9 AIRPLANES ARE IN EXCELLENT CONDITION, WE MAY DECIDE TO ROUTE THEM THROUGH THE DEPOT AT SACRAMENTO, CAL. (MCCLELLAN AFB) FOR RE-PAINTING, NEW TIRES, AND GENERAL "SPRUCING UP" PRIOR TO SHIPPING THEM. THIS SHOULD MAKE THEM ESPECIALLY ATTRACTIVE ADDITIONS TO THE AIR FORCE OF EITHER ROC OR ROK.

3. WE HAVE NOT YET DETERMINED WHICH AIRPLANES WILL GO TO KOREA. THIS WILL DEPEND, AMONG OTHER THINGS, ON THE CONDITION OF THE AIRPLANES NOW IN VIETNAM AND THE AMOUNT OF REWORK THEY WILL REQUIRE. TENTATIVELY, WE WOULD LIKE TO RETURN 20 FLYABLE AIRCRAFT TO TAIWAN ON A PRIORITY BASIS SO THAT ONE OF OUR TWO F-4 SQUADRONS DEPLOYED THERE UNDER ENHANCE PLUS CAN BE WITHDRAWN. MOREOVER, WE ARE NOT OBLIGATED TO RETURN THE 20 F-5AS TO THE ROC IN CONDITION "EQUAL TO OR BETTER" THAN THE ONES THEY ORIGINALLY PROVIDED, AS WE ARE IN THE CASE OF THE 36 FOR KOREA. WE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO RETURN TO THE ROK 36 AIRCRAFT IN THE BEST CONDITION POSSIBLE, OF COURSE. HOWEVER, PRESENT INDICATIONS ARE THAT MOST IF NOT ALL OF THE AIRCRAFT WILL REQUIRE SOME REWORK TO BRING THEM UP TO THE REQUIRED CONDITION. IDEALLY, WE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE THE KOREANS ACCEPT THE AIRCRAFT ON AN "AS-IS" BASIS AND AT THE SAME TIME PROVIDE THEM WITH SUFFICIENT FUNDS FOR THE NECESSARY REWORK. THIS, WE WOULD HOPE, WOULD FULFILL OUR OBLIGATION COMPLETELY REGARDING THE RETURN OF THE 36 AIRCRAFT. IF THE KOREANS BALK, WE CAN USE AS A NEGOTIATING CHIP A PROPOSAL TO HAVE THE NECESSARY REWORK COMPLETED INSTEAD IN TAIWAN.

4. THERE IS SOME QUESTION HERE AND IN DEFENSE AS TO HOW MUCH CAPABILITY ACTUALLY EXISTS IN KOREA TO PERFORM THE
SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 184134

NECESSARY REWORK OF THE F-5S. WE BELIEVE THE ROK TO BE FULLY CAPABLE OF DOING ALL THE WORK, AND WOULD IMAGINE THAT THEY WOULD ALSO BE EAGER TO DO IT, ESPECIALLY SINCE THE FUNDS WILL BE PROVIDED BY THE US. HOWEVER, IN AN EFFORT TO OBTAIN A DEFINITIVE ANSWER THE AIR FORCE HAS REQUESTED THAT THEIR LOGISTICS COMMAND (AFLC) PROVIDE AN ESTIMATE OF ROK CAPABILITIES. THEIR TELEGRAM IS QUOTED BELOW FOR YOUR INFORMATION.

5. EMBASSY IS INVITED TO FORWARD COMMENTS/RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE FOREGOING WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT NO DISCUSSIONS SHOULD BE HELD WITH ROKG AT THIS TIME.

6. WHAT FOLLOWS IS VERBATIM TEXT OF SECRET TELEGRAM FROM CSAF TO AFLC, DTG 121523Z SEP 73, SUBJECT F-5A AIRCRAFT. QUOTE: PREVIOUS CORRESPONDENCE ON THE RETURN OF THE F-5A ACFT FROM VNAF TO THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA AND KOREA INDICATED PING TUNG WAS THE ONLY FACILITY CAPABLE OF PERFORMING REWORK IF MORE THAN CORROSION TREATMENT WAS CONTEMPLATED. 2. WITHOUT CONTACTING THE COUNTRY, REQUEST AN AFLC ESTIMATE ON DEGREE OF REWORK THAT COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED IN KOREA, I.E. CORROSION CONTROL, TCTO'S, OR ANY OTHER WORK REQUIRED TO RETURN ACFT IN AS GOOD A CONDITION AS WE RECEIVED THEM. END QUOTE RUSH

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